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CAPITOLA

A TRUE NARRATIVE

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CAPITOLA.

A True Narrative.

"CAP, ma says you are going to be baptized next week any how—or give up school." This from a younger sister of Capitola, or, more familiarly, Cap or Tola, who sits holding the baby. There has always been a baby in this Mormon home, and Cap declares that all thirteen of her brothers and sisters were handsome. While they were little she had loved and cared for each in its turn.

"Well, when you see me bein' baptized, you will see something I never expect to see," she answered, putting the little one on her knee and trotting it vigorously. "Ma nor pa can't make me do that. I ain't no Mormon, nor never will be."

"But, Cap, the teachers were here last night, and they talked to ma so long she is bound to have you saved. And pa says you will have to be baptized or he won't keep you."

"Pa, he has been drunk so long he ain't got no

call to talk. I've been doin' the chores and gettin' up the wood right along, and I think I have about earned my victuals. At any rate, just you keep quiet, and I'll see about this baptizin' business."

"Capitola-h!" came a dreary voice from indoors. And Capitola, standing up with baby in her arms, calls, "Comin', ma;" and aside to Annie, who still sits with her feet dangling from the top step, "Annie, it's just this way: I am a Presbyterian. I ain't no Mormon, and no one can make me be one, either; but you ain't bound to go tellin' it. Now run and turn that calf out of the Lucerne patch; he'll be all swelled up by night, eatin' that way."

Capitola puts the baby in the cradle and helps her mother about the supper. "I think, Tola," the mother says, "your pa is plumb set on your bein' baptized. You know he ain't been pleased at you goin' to that mission; and the bishop, he do say that we all must be gatherin' our children into the Church."

"But, mother, I told you I was never goin' to be a Mormon. I declare I can't see any sense in this bein' baptized."

"Well, Tola, your father says if you don't go to our Sunday-school you can't go to that Presbyterian mission-school one more day."

"Now, ma, you see if I don't make it all right. I may go to Sunday-school and not get baptized either."

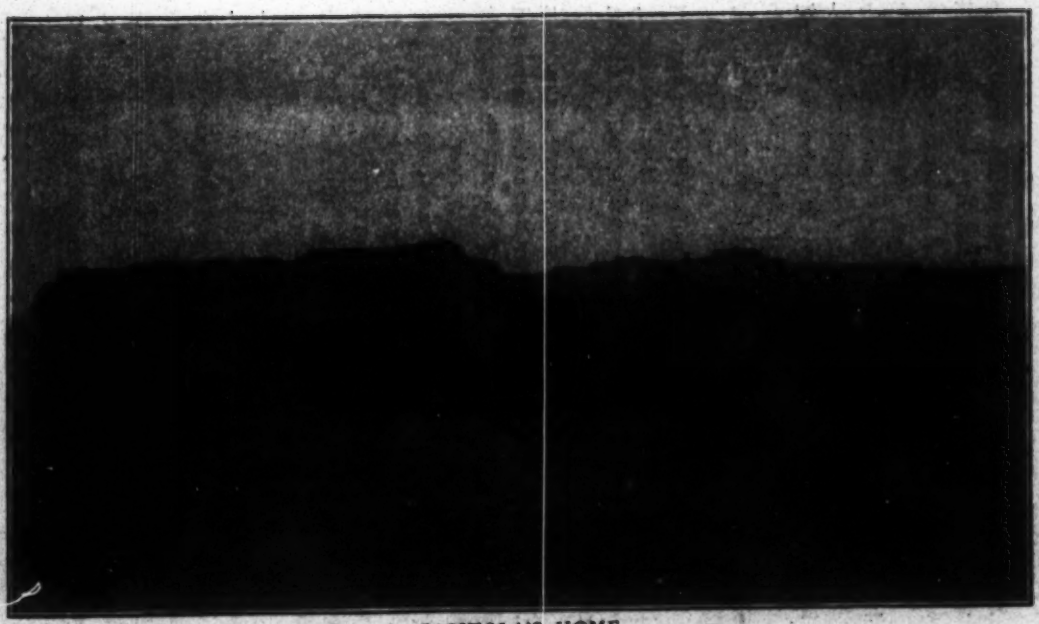
Supper ready, the great family crowds in to get something "while it is going." The older ones sit

down, while the younger ones stand around and reach for whatever they can get. Then Capitola clears away the supper, "pails the cow," helps her mother with the children, and then, creeping away from her father's sight, takes out her beloved school books. Here is the algebra she has just begun, and her teacher's words of praise, as she stood up before the class that day and thought out the hardest and longest problems in the lesson, still sounds in her ears; but to-night she can only think of Annie's words and try to plan some way of escape. "What if I should go away. I wonder now if they would let me live at the mission. But I will never be baptized, even if I must go away from ma and all the children, for I know it ain't right, nohow."

She shuts her book with a sigh, and crawls into bed beside her two sisters with the baby in her arms, and closing her eyes, sleeps, with a prayer which she does not know as such upon her lips: "That in some way she will get out of that baptizing."

Nine o'clock next day finds Tola in her place at school. At recess she must tell Miss —— that she has to be baptized or leave school. Maybe Miss —— can tell her if it would be all right to be baptized just to keep the folks still and be a Presbyterian just the same. A Presbyterian and a Christian are one and the same to this child of the Mormons.

"Capitola," the teacher's voice arouses her from her thoughts, "I had a letter yesterday from a teacher in the East who wishes to help some deserving girl,



CAPITOLA'S HOME.

and I have been wondering if you could leave home and come here to the school and live with us, and learn to cook and become a good housekeeper."

Tears spring into the girl's eyes, and she throws her arms about her teacher, saying, "Oh, Miss, how did it happen, I have been feeling so low all the morning because I must give up school or be baptized, and you know I couldn't be baptized again; it ain't no good. And now I can come and learn all I want to. I never can thank you enough."

In some way Tola won her mother to her way of thinking, and she was soon at the Mission Home, wearing clean clothes and white aprons, and a ribbon on her hair like other girls.

Capitola had been in the Mission Home six months when the teacher had to tell her that the lady had died and there was no money to be found to keep her longer in the Home. The poor girl never lost heart, but when she took her clean clothes from her clean room and turned her face homeward she said, "It seems like I can't go, that I must stay, but God must know what He wants of me, and I believe He will send me back."

She went to her home; to the noisy, dirty children and the drunken father, who jeered her for "gettin' left by them Presbyterians," and the poor, untidy mother who only said, "Well, if you have come down from your high horses you might turn to and help me with the youngsters." This was her homecoming, but she had learned where to put her trust

while at school, and now she lifts a true prayer to her Comforter, that she may live as He would have her live in this hard right place.

Tola has not yet gone back to school, but she says, "It seems as if I will get back some way, and I am studying, but it is awful hard to get air enough into our house some way, there are so many of us, and some days I feel like letting the whole thing drop, but I am bound to be a teacher, and I am bound to get back somehow."

* * * *

Since the publication of this little story in "Over Sea and Land" (May, 1897) the question "Is it true?" has been asked many times.

The author, in reply to the question, writes: "Capitola is a real girl, and can be taken into our School Home again just as soon as some one is found willing and able to *help* pay her expenses, for she can work for part payment.

"Her real name is not Capitola, though that is a common name among the pupils in the School. The Latter Day Saints are ardent theater-goers, and Capitola was a very popular character some years ago, and many mothers named their little daughters after their stage favorite. Our Capitola is now at her home helping to care for the children. On Children's Day she had nearly all of them out attending the exercises at the mission. As she ushered them in, with a tired, yet satisfied air, we could not but admire the

strength and patience she has shown in reducing them to such a state of cleanliness, and getting them to the mission in spite of obstacles placed in the way by her father.

"Last spring Capitola took the school examination for entering the first year regular Academic course, and passed almost perfectly.

"The rest of Capitola's story is not yet written nor lived. We leave her to her Heavenly Father's loving care, feeling sure her faith will be rewarded, and that she will be sent back and fitted to become a Christian worker in a much-needed field. There are now 2,500 Mormon missionaries, so called, in the world at work to bring converts back with them to their Zion. And shall we not do something to help one Christian girl to lead her people to a true God?"

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